

# THE COMMON CAUSE OF HUMANITY.

The Organ of the National Union of  
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE SOCIETIES.

NON-PARTY.

*Societies and Branches in the Union*  
602.

LAW-ABIDING.

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## HOW TO HELP.

The N.U.W.S.S. is an association of over 52,000 men and women who have banded themselves together, under the leadership of Mrs. Henry Fawcett, for the purpose of obtaining the Parliamentary vote for women on the same terms as it is or may be granted to men. At this great national crisis, however, they have for the time being suspended their political activities, in order to put themselves and their Union at the service of those who are organising the relief of distress caused by the war. They desire to help in the most effective way, by work rather than doles; to preserve the life of the race for the future by special care of mothers and young children; and generally to illustrate in their own lives the truth that the Suffragists' demand is for duties rather than for rights, and their ideal is the service of humanity. WILL YOU JOIN?

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### Notes and News.

#### British-born "Aliens."

We little thought that our protest against the injustice of the re-enactment of the provision in the British Nationality and Status of Aliens Act (1914), which deprives a British woman of her nationality on her marriage with an alien, would be so soon and so overwhelmingly justified. To-day, there are hundreds of British-born women who have never been out of this country, who have been made to register as alien enemies, who have regularly to report themselves at the police stations, who are not allowed to go more than five miles from their place of registration, whose relief has been declared by the circular issued by the Government Committee on the Prevention and Relief of Distress as falling "outside the scope of the National Relief Fund"; whereas no corresponding restrictions have been placed on the British-born men who have married alien enemies. Not only, however, are these British-born wives who have been deprived of their nationality considered "outside the scope of the National Relief Fund," but this Government Committee has taken upon itself to recommend the exclusion of a large number of British subjects. They suggest that the dependants of alien enemies should be outside the scope of the fund, and these dependants include large numbers of children who have been born in this country and are, therefore, British subjects.

#### British-born Wives and Children of Interned Aliens.

All the more, however, do we welcome the recognition by the Government of its responsibility towards the British-born wives of aliens through the Local Government Board. A circular, issued on November 19th, after pointing out that the

funds placed at the disposal of the American Embassy by the German and Austrian Governments for the benefit of distressed Germans and Austrians may not continue to be available for the British-born wives of interned persons, and their children, provides that the Guardians are to administer a special fund to the British-born wives of interned aliens who are without sufficient resources. The relief is to be given on the same scale as that to the wives of British husbands who are without resources. In the special case where the alien husband was in regular employment at the time of his internment, the wife is to receive 8s. (or 10s. in London) a week, with an additional 1s. 6d. a week for each dependant child. The women are to be informed that it is not poor relief, but money specially voted by the Government for this purpose. Wide publicity should be given to this information, both as it affects the British-born wife and the German or Austrian-born wife. Much of the distress which many of these women have suffered might have been spared had it been widely known that the American Embassy had such funds to dispense. And it apparently still has funds for the German and Austrian-born wives of alien enemies.

#### The Childless Widow and the State.

On Wednesday last an interesting debate took place in the House of Commons on naval and military pensions. A desire was expressed on all sides of the House to deal generously with both the soldiers and sailors themselves, and also with their widows and children, and the whole question has now been referred to a representative committee whose decisions Mr. Asquith has promised that the Government will accept "with perfect loyalty." The chief difference of opinion was shown on the question of the childless widow. Mr. Barnes maintained that she should be "kept out of the labour market altogether, and given a pension which would maintain her in the kind of life to which she had been accustomed." Mr. Bonar Law, on the other hand, declared that young widows without children who had been in the habit of working "would naturally prefer to work as honourable and independent persons who gain their own livelihood, and add to their own comfort," and he protested against putting them in a position in which they need not work at all. The question at once arises—is a married woman to be regarded as an individual, or as part of a family? In the latter case (represented by Mr. Barnes), she is, when pensioned, simply receiving the deferred pay of her husband, and this pay should be sufficient to maintain her. In the second (represented by Mr. Asquith), she was not "supported" by her husband, but was a fellow wage-earner with him, her work

being the care of the home. When he dies, she is released for other work, and may rightly be expected to do it. The problem goes right to the heart of the question of woman's position in the world, and we are inclined, on the whole, to believe that Mr. Asquith's view is the sounder one.

**The Consequence of Being Right.**

The Prime Minister must not, however, save money by regarding women as individuals with duties now, only to regard them as non-individuals with no rights but those belonging to their husbands later on. In other words, if they must work they must also vote!

**Pensions and Class.**

The sex question is, moreover, complicated by the old vicious traditions of class. If it is right and self-respecting of the childless working-class widow to work, it cannot be right for the officer's widow to be idle. Yet no one proposes to thrust her into the labour market. It is true that, in practice, it would be cruel to do so since middle-class women are still frequently quite untrained for any kind of skilled work. But then so are many working-class wives. It may be possible, if not logically or finally right, to meet the difficulty by a pension system which would put the widow in a position to command a training, and to hold out for good terms on entering work. We believe that Mr. Asquith is mistaken in supposing that "highly subsidized widows" would bring down the rate. They are far more likely to force it up. It is the economically helpless who are sweated and the cause of sweating.

**The Widow with Children.**

In discussing the position of the widow left with children, Mr. Barnes made the very sound statement that she ought to be regarded as the agent of the State and the children made wards of the State, while the mother receives enough from the State to enable her to rear her children in decency and comfort. With State responsibility must go State machinery, and the Pensions Committee or Education Committee will probably be the most suitable agency through which the State can work.

**A Select Committee.**

We have nothing to complain of in the *personnel* of the Select Committee appointed to inquire into the whole question, so far as the men are concerned. But the idiocy of shutting women out from all share in their own government becomes more than ever apparent when it results in a purely male committee to consider a question which is so much more a woman's question than a man's. A "Select Committee" must consist of Members of Parliament; but why not alter the form of the Committee and give it a name which would allow women to be included?

**Total Abstinence in Russia.**

*The Manchester Guardian* (November 20th) publishes a description of the effect in Russia of total prohibition. We can only quote the concluding words from a Simbirsk correspondent:—

"Temperance has done a great piece of work in the villages. It has introduced peace and tranquillity into public life, brought joy into the families, has raised the material condition of the peasants, and has rendered them purer, better, more moral. May this holy, long-desired temperance for ever remain in the life of the village!" And may Great Britain, we may add, find some way congenial to the spirit of her people, of securing results so enviable in our great ally.

**Comforts for Belgian Soldiers.**

We call attention to an appeal in another column for comforts for the Belgian Army. These brave soldiers have no one "at home" to whom to look for help. Their homes are desolate. We are doing what we can for those who are driven out. Let us also do something for the men who are fighting and dying to win their homes back again. We are confident that if material could be provided, the Belgian refugees in our country would like no work so well as that of making comforts for their men at the front. It would be a consolation, indeed, to them to be thus able to help.

**In Parliament.**

November 18th.

**WIVES AND CHILDREN OF INTERNED ALIENS.**

MR. DICKINSON (N. St. Pancras, U.) asked the Under Secretary for War whether a large number of the wives and children of interned aliens are in a state of destitution, many of these wives being of British birth, and the children of British nationality.

MR. TENNANT (Berwickshire, L.) replied that funds have been placed at the disposal of the Local Government Board by the Treasury for the relief of these cases. The distribution would be through the Board of Guardians.

**SOLDIERS AND SAILORS AND THEIR DEPENDANTS—PENSIONS AND GRANTS.**

Motion made and question proposed:—

"That a Select Committee be appointed to consider a scheme of pensions and grants for men in the naval and military services wounded in the present war, and for the widows, orphans, and dependants of men who have lost their lives."

MR. HAYES FISHER (Fulham, U.) urged that the reference should be enlarged to include men discharged by reason of wounds or disease arising from the war. To this the PRIME MINISTER agreed. A suggestion made by MR. DENMAN, and supported by MR. BUTCHER, that the question of separation allowances should be considered by the Committee, as well as that of pensions, was also accepted, and it was explained that the question of payments to officers and their dependants would also be considered.

MR. HAYES FISHER in initiating the discussion, pointed out the difficulty of fixing any flat rule for pensions that would be fair to all, as the soldiers in the new army came from so many different classes. "One woman will be more than well off with £1 a week, while another woman will be heavily penalised with the same amount":—

"My own view of this question is broadly this: that . . . there ought to be a capital sum of money placed in the hands of some body or another, such as the Royal Patriotic Fund, which has administered the pensions for the Transvaal war. Whether the flat rate adopted be 7s. 6d., or 10s., or 12s., or £1 a week, you will never really satisfactorily and equitably solve this question unless you put a capital sum of money in the hands of some body which shall differentiate and discriminate between the different cases which have to be met."

Mr. Hayes Fisher maintained that the widow under the new scheme was little or no better off than under the old:—

"They say the old scale only shows 5s.; the new scale 7s. 6d. Now, that is very misleading. . . . The real pension which a Transvaal widow gets is not merely the Government pension of 5s., but she also gets a supplementary pension of 2s. from the Royal Patriotic Fund Corporation."

He urged that later on the whole question of pensions and allowances to wives and children during the war should be handed over to one body, sitting in one building. At present there was great confusion and overlapping, and if the old-age pension officers were to administer the new pensions, and the Royal Patriotic Funds the pensions to Transvaal widows, the confusion would be still worse.

**PENALISATION OF MARRIAGE.**

MR. BARNES (Glasgow, Blackfriars, Lab.) protested against the penalisation of married men by stoppages out of their meagre pay of 7s. A married man should be given the full 7s., and the State should pay his wife enough to live on in comfort. Several other speakers supported this view, and maintained that it was absurd to regard a soldier receiving 7s. a week as coming under the common-law obligation to maintain his wife. This obligation ought to be undertaken by the State.

**THE WIDOW.**

With regard to widows, Mr. Barnes considered that they should be given enough to keep them out of the labour market altogether. He was glad to acknowledge that the payment of 5s. instead of 1s. 6d. for the first child was an improvement, but this was no more than is now given by many Boards of Guardians for boarded-out children:—

"In paying 5s. in respect of the first child, you are putting the child of the soldier, who lays down his life for his country, on the same level as the child maintained by the Board of Guardians. Further than that, the Guardians do not limit it to one child. They pay the same amount in respect of two or three, or even half-a-dozen. The present scale of pay meant that a widow would have to go out to work, and that the children would be neglected. . . . The State should pay her a sufficient amount to keep herself and children in the comfort to which they are entitled."

Mr. Barnes also urged that the pensions allowed to disabled men were "miserably inadequate." No man could live on 14s. a week, and it meant that he was to be a burden to his friends and relatives.

Protesting against the "fussy people going round visiting the homes of working-class people," Mr. Barnes said:—

"There was the case of a woman whose son went to the war in the early days. She got nothing; she was entitled to nothing from the public

funds, but she was visited by a man, who, after asking a lot of impertinent and sometimes indelicate questions, instead of giving the woman anything, went down on his marrow-bones and began to pray for her, and then told her that he had nothing to give her in the way of material aid, but gave her a tract, with a preposterous picture. . . . I protest against these people going to working-class homes in that way. . . . This sort of thing is getting sickening."

He demanded that the Government should deal generously with the widows and dependants of soldiers, and that payments should be made through the Post Office or some agency of the State.

MR. BONAR LAW (Lancs., Bootle, U.) did not agree with Mr. Barnes that it would be for the benefit of widows of our soldiers that they should be in a position in all cases in which they would never have to work again.

"We must have regard to the fact that a considerable number of these young widows are without children, and are not, therefore, burdened with the cares of maternity—that they have been in the habit of working, and would naturally prefer to work as honourable and independent persons who gain their own livelihood and add to their own comforts."

MR. BRACE (Glamorgan, Lab.) put the view of the trade organisations that every home should have at least a pound a week, the home being taken as the unit.

The great body of organised labour in the country would not accept the Government scale, but hoped that it would be amended "in a direction to be fair and just and honourable to the brave men and officers alike who are giving their lives and their blood for their country."

MR. WALTER LONG (Strand, U.) suggested that more use should be made of civilian assistance, in order to secure that soldiers' wives should get their money as soon as the men left. All the difficulties and complications which arose in connection with these payments had made the work of the War Office almost impossible. The work could only be done easily and smoothly if the administration were extended by breaking up the system into smaller districts and making use of the local government organisation, including the pensions officers.

MR. PRATT (Linlithgow, Lib.) supported this suggestion, and protested against the police supervision of soldiers' wives. He was glad to see, from a White Paper, that, with regard to pensions, the local pensions committee, and especially the education authorities, were being called in to see that the money paid to mothers in trust for their children was properly spent for the benefit of these children. He hoped that a similar line of policy would be adopted with regard to the payment of separation allowances. The only fair test that could be applied

as to whether any woman was making proper use of the money was whether she was looking after her children properly.

Mr. Pratt also said that the amount decided by Government did not do justice to the woman either as wife or woman. He did not agree with the Prime Minister that to give a young woman sufficient to relieve her from going out to work would have a demoralising effect:—

"There are many women who will be left who have not had to work in their younger days, who were brought up at home, and have never been thrown on the labour market, and I think it would be a great misfortune, little short of a scandal, if, because of the heroism and loyalty of the husband, they are thrown on the labour market now."

It was resolved:—

"That a Select Committee be appointed to consider a scheme of Pensions and Grants for officers and men in the Naval and Military services, disabled by wounds or disease arising out of the present war, and for the widows, orphans, and dependants of officers and men who have lost their lives; whether the existing scheme of separation allowances to wives, children, and dependants should be amended; if so, in what way?"

Mr. Barnes, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Bonar Law, Mr. McKenna, and Mr. T. P. O'Connor are the members appointed to the Select Committee.

November 23rd.

**BRITISH-BORN WIVES OF ALIENS.**

MR. NIELD (Middlesex, Ealing, U.) asked the Home Secretary whether he would advance the applications for renaturalisation of widows of alien enemies who, at the time of their marriage, were British-born subjects, and who now desire to resume their naturalisation.

MR. MCKENNA replied that such applications were given the most favourable consideration, and dealt with as quickly as the pressure of work allowed, but that meanwhile they cannot be excused from registering.

**PUBLIC-HOUSES AND CLUBS.**

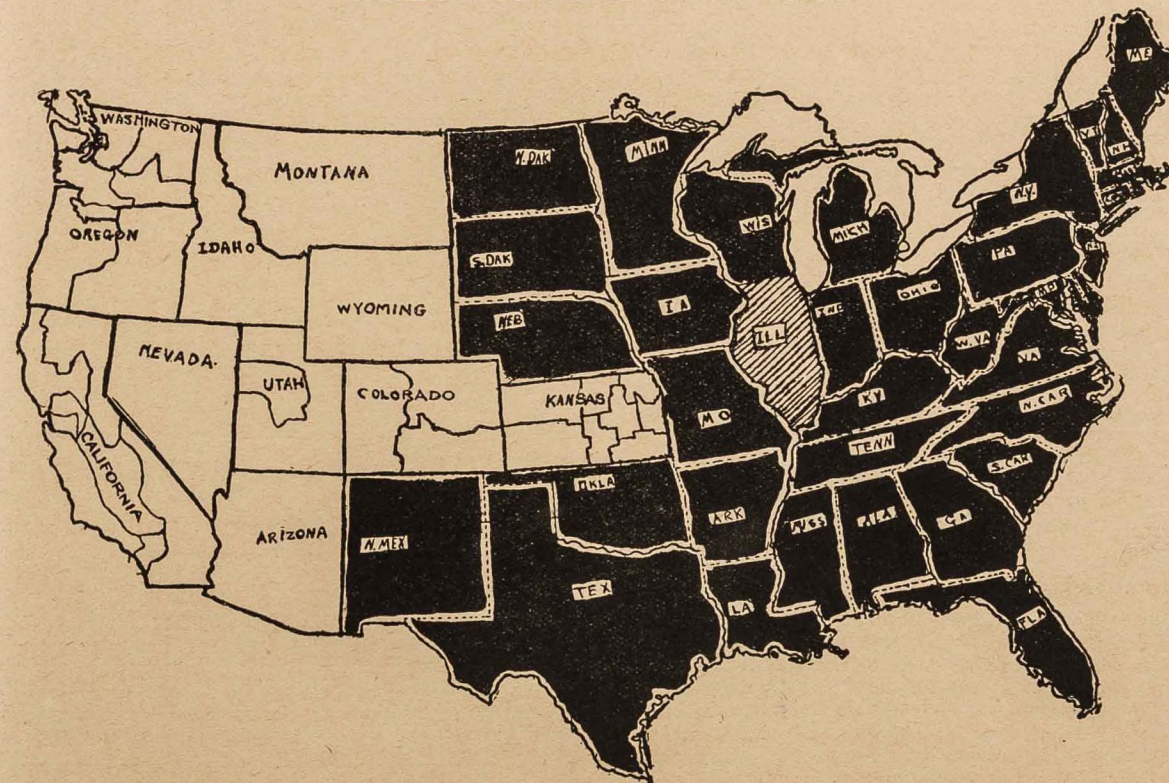
MR. CHANCELLOR asked the Home Secretary whether he is aware that the Croydon borough magistrates have recently passed a resolution that it was desirable to close public-houses and clubs in that borough at 9 p.m., and submitted it to the Chief Commissioner of the Metropolitan Police, who refused to recommend earlier closing; and whether, seeing that numbers of soldiers stationed at the Crystal Palace, Mitcham-road Barracks, and Caterham Barracks are frequently in Croydon, he will take steps to have their resolutions complied with?

MR. MCKENNA: The Commissioner of Police informs me that he has not received the resolution referred to by my hon. Friend.

November 24th.

Asked whether he would authorise women patrol corps for Scotland on the lines adopted in England, the Lord Advocate replied that arrangements were being considered.

**WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE IN THE U.S.A.**



[In the white States women have equal political rights with men. In the shaded one (Illinois) they have the Municipal and Presidential vote. In the black States, they have neither.]











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Table of donations for N.U.W.S.S. Scottish Women's Hospital, listing names and amounts.

Detailed List.

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ANNOUNCEMENTS.

Mrs. W. TUDOR-POLE will speak on "The Deeper Aspect of the Great War" (Chair, Mrs. Despard), Saturday, November 28th, 8 p.m., Caxton Hall, Westminster.

ALTRINCHAM AND DISTRICT INDEPENDENT LABOUR PARTY AND WOMEN'S LABOUR LEAGUE.—A meeting of members and friends of the above will be held at the Public Institute, Altrincham, on Friday, December 4th, at 8 p.m.

MEMORIAL HALL, MANCHESTER, MONDAY, December 7th, at 7.30 p.m. HOPE SQUIRE and FRANK MERRICK will play UNFAMILIAR WORKS for TWO PIANOFORTES.

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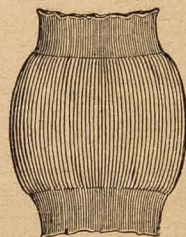
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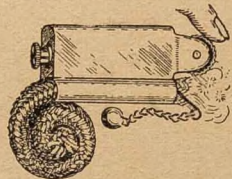
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